suggestion of Government of India the State Government of Kerala has submitted the revised proposal to National Horticulture Board to avail the assistance for setting up of cold storages and post harvest management facilities at the cost of Rs. 368.50 lakhs. National Horticulture Board has examined the proposal and sought some clarifications from State Government. The final reply from the State Government is awaited.

**Coconut Farming System**

2044. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Kerala Government has submitted a project for development of coconut farming system in Kerala seeking financial assistance for implementation of the same; and

(b) if so, the details of the project and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of Kerala has submitted a Project for Development of Coconut Farming in Kerala, which envisages to increase production and productivity of the crop through replanting the diseased, senile, old and unproductive palms and better management in existing palms. Most of the measures suggested in the project are already being supported under various programmes of the Coconut Development Board. During 1997-98, out of a total allocation of Rs. 19.75 crores for various coconut development programmes, the Board released Rs. 10.28 crores to the State of Kerala. For the year 1998-99, an allocation of Rs. 10.41 crores has been made for Kerala.

**Help to Cotton Growing Farmers**

2045. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for declining prices of cotton; and

(b) the steps propose to help cotton growing farmers in their districts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The prices of cotton which had declined recently due to peak harvest season have started increasing as in evident from the Wholesale Price indices given below:-

| | |
|---|---|
| August | 377.1 |
| September | 370.4 |
| October | 361.9 |
| November | 367.3 |

The prices are currently ruling much above the *minimum support levels.*

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) as nodal agency of the Government makes purchases for price support as and when the market prices touch the minimum support prices. The CCI also makes purchases under commercial operations as well as for export purposes.

**Cotton Production**

2046. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that cotton crop for 1997-98 was 11.4 million bales against 14.3 million bales for 1996-97 as a result of which, cotton had to be imported for domestic use; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken to improve indigenous production to meet the growing demand in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) According to the official estimates, the production of cotton during 1997-98 is estimated to be 11.2 million bales as against 14.3 million bales in 1996-97. During 1997-98, due to lower cotton production particularly of long and extra long staple varieties and also in view of the prevailing lower international prices of cotton *vis-a-vis* domestic prices. the textile mills had reported to import of 4 lakh bales of cotton.

(b) With a view to increasing production and productivity a centrally sponsored scheme namely, Intensive Cotton Development Programme is being implemented in 11 major cotton growing States. Under the scheme assistance is provided for production of breeder seeds; distribution of certified seeds;